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BALTIMORE.

BY HENRY JAMES.

I.

IT had doubtless not been merely absurd, as the wild winter proceeded, to find one's self so enamored of the very name of the South that one was ready to take it in any small atmospheric instalment, and to feel the echo of its voice in the yell of any engine that happened not to drag one either directly North or directly West. One tended at least, on these terms, in some degree, toward the land where the citron blooms, and that was something to go on with, a handful of small change accepted for the time as a pledge of great gold pieces to come. It is astonishing, along the Atlantic coast, how, from the moment the North ceases to insist, the South may begin to presume; ever so little, no doubt, at first, yet with protrusive feelers that tell how she only wants the right sensibility, the true waiting victim, to play upon. It is a question certainly of where, on the so frequently torpid stretch of shore I speak of, the North does cease to insist; or perhaps I should more correctly say a question of when it does. It appeared incapable of this fine tact almost anywhere, I confess, at the season, the first supposedly relenting weeks, of my facing in earnest to Florida; and the interest indeed of that slightly grim adventure was to be in the way it ministered to the coincidence, for me, of two quite opposed strains of reflection. On the one hand, nothing could "say" more to the subject long expatriated, condemned by the terms of his exile to a chronic consciousness of gray northern seas, than to feel how, from New York, or even from Boston, he had but to sit still in his portentous car, had but to exercise a due concentrated patience, in order to become aware, without personal effort or suffered transfer, of that most charming of all watchable processes, the gradual soft, the distinctively demoralized,

conversion of the soul of Nature. This conversion, if I may so put it without profanity, has always struck me, on any southward course, as a return, on the part of that soul, from a comparatively grim Theistic faith to the ineradicable principle of Paganism; a conscious casting-off of the dread theological abstraction—an abstraction still, even with all Puritan stiffening—in the interest of multiplied, lurking, familiar powers; divinities, graces, presences as unseen but as inherent as the scents clinging to the folds of Nature's robe. It would be on such occasions the fault of the divine familiars themselves if their haunts and shrines were empty, for earth and air and day and night, as we go, still affect us as moods of their sympathy, still vibrate to the breath of their passage; so that our progress, under the expanding sun, resembles a little less a journey through space than a retracing of the course of the ages.

These are fine fancies, however, and what is more to my point is that the theory (so agreeable to entertain at Jersey City) of a direct connection between the snow-banks and the orange-groves is a thing of sweetness only so long as practically unshaken. There is continuity, goodness knows, always in America—it is the last thing that is ever broken: the question for the particular case is, But continuity of what? The basis of my individual hope had been that of the reign of the orange-grove; but what it proved, at the crisis I name, was positively that of the usurpation of the snow-bank. It was possible, indubitably, in such conditions, to go to Charleston on sledges—which made in fact, after all, for directness of connection. It made moreover, by the same token, for a certain sinister light on the general truth of our grand territorial unity. It was as if the winter, at the end of February, abroad for a walk, had marched as promptly and inevitably from the Arctic Circle to the Gulf as it might have proceeded, with pride in its huge clear course, from the top of Broadway to the Battery. This brought home again, as I myself went, I remember, one of those three or four main ideas, suggested by the recurrent conditions, which become as obsessions for the traveller in the States—if he have a mind, that is, so indecently exposed to ideas: the sense, constantly fed, and from a hundred sources, that, as Nature abhors a vacuum, so it is of the genius of the American land and the American people to abhor, whenever may be, a discrimination. They are reduced, together, under stress, to making

discriminations, but they make them, I think, as lightly and scantily as possible. With the lively insistence of that impression, even though it quite undermined my fond view of a loose and overreaching citronic belt, I found my actually monotonous way beguiled. Practically, till I reached Charleston, this way, disclaiming every invidious intent, refused to be dissociated from anything else in the world: it was only another case of the painting with a big brush, a brush steeped in crude universal white, and of the colossal size this implement was capable of assuming. Gradations, transitions, differences of any sort, temporal, material, social, whether in man or in his environment, shrank somehow, under its sweep, to negligible items; and one had perhaps never yet seemed so to move through a vast simplified scheme. The illustration was once more, in fine, of the small inherent, the small accumulated, resistance in American air to any force that does simplify. One found the signs of such resistance as little in the prospect enjoyed from the car-window as one distinguished them in the vain images of the interior; those human documents, deciphered from one's seat in the Pullman, which yet do always, in *their* way, for the traveller, constitute precious evidence. The spread of this single great wash of winter from latitude to latitude struck me in fact as having its analogy in the vast vogue of some infinitely selling novel, one of those happy volumes of which the circulation roars, periodically, from Atlantic to Pacific and from great windy State to State, in the manner, as I have heard it vividly put, of a blazing prairie fire; with as little possibility of arrest from "criticism" in the one case as from the bleating of lost sheep in the other. Everything, so to speak, was monotonized, and the whole social order might have had its nose, for the time, buried, by one levelling doom, in the pages that, after the break of the spell, it would never know itself to mention again. Of course, one remembered meanwhile, there were spells and spells, and the free field (the particular freedom of which is the point of my remark) would on occasion be just as open to the far-exhaled breath of the South. That in fact is what I was to find it (though, I thought, all delightfully) later in the season, when the freedom of the field struck me as pure benefit. I was not, at the end of February, really to meet it (as I had looked for it) before crossing the Florida line; but toward the middle of June I was to meet it, enchantingly, at Baltimore, and this, then, as

I had not stopped there in my previous course, was, even beyond the wondrous February Florida, to reveal to me, grateful for any such favor, the South in her freshness. The freshness was in part, no doubt—and even perhaps to extravagance—mine; I testify at all events first for Baltimore.

It would probably be again the freshness, of this confessedly subjective sort, it would probably be again the state of alert response to any favor of the class just hinted at; but the immediate effect of the Maryland capital was to place it, to my troubled vision, and quite at the head of its group, in a category of images and memories small at the best, and the charm of which casts a shadow, none the less, even as the rose wears a thorn. I refer, indeed, in this slightly portentous figure, to the mere familiar truth that, if representative values, and the traceable or the imaginable connections of things, happen to have, on occasion, for your eyes and your intelligence, an existence of any intensity, your case, as a traveller, an observer, a reporter, is "bound," from the first, under the stirred impression, to loom for you in some distressful shape. These representative values and constructive connections, the whole of the latent vividness of things, not only remain, under expression, subject to no definite chemical test, no mathematical proof whatever, but almost turn their charming backs and toss their wilful heads at one's poor little array of terms and equivalents. There thus immediately rises for the lone visionary, betrayed and arrested in the very act of vision, that spectre of impotence which dogs the footsteps of perception, and whose presence is like some poison-drop in the silver cup. Baltimore put on for me, from the first glance, the form of the silver cup, filled with the mildest, sweetest decoction; but I had no sooner begun to taste of it than I began to taste also of the infused bitter. It had, in its way, during that first early hour or two of the summer evening, a perfect felicity: which meant, for the touched intelligence, that it was full of pleasantly playing reference and reflection, that it exhaled on the spot, as the word goes, an atmosphere; that it wore, to contemplation, in fine, a character as marked with mild accents as some faded old uniform is marked with tarnished buttons and braid—albeit these sources of interest were too closely of the texture to be snipped off, in the guise of patterns or relics, by any mere sharp shears of journalism.

I arrived late in the day, and the day had been lovely; I alighted

at a large, fresh, peaceful hostelry, imposingly modern yet quietly affable, and, having recognized the deep, soft general note, even from my windows, as that of a kind of mollified vivacity, I sought the streets with as many tacit questions as I judged they would tolerate or as the waning day would allow me to put. It took but that hour, as I strolled in the early eventide, to give me the sense of the predicament I have glanced at; that of finding myself committed to the view of Baltimore as quite insidiously "sympathetic," quite inordinately amiable—which amounted, in other words, to the momentous proposition that she was interesting—and still of wondering, by the same stroke, how I was to make any such statement plausible. Character is founded on elements and features, so many particular parts which conduce to an expression. So I walked about the dear little city looking for the particular parts—all with the singular effect of rather failing to find them, and with my impression of felicity at the same time persistently growing. The felicity was certainly not that of a mere blank; there must accordingly have been items and objects, signs and tokens, there must have been causes of so charming a consequence: there must have been the little numbers (not necessarily big, if only a tall enough column) for the careful sum on my slate. What happened then, remarkably, was that, while I mechanically so argued, my impression was fixing itself by a wild logic of its own, and that I was presently to see how it would, when once settled to a certain intensity, snap its fingers at warrants and documents. If it was a question of a slate, the slate was used, at school, I remembered, for more than one purpose; so that mine, by my walk's end, instead of a show of neat ciphering, exhibited simply a bold-drawn image—which had the merit, moreover, of not being in the least a caricature. The moral of this was precious—that of the fine impunity with which, if one but had sensibility, the ciphering could be neglected and in fact almost contemned: always, that is (and only), *with* one's finer wits about one. Without them one was at best, really, nowhere—even with "items" by the thousand; so that the place became, quite adorably, a lesson in the use of that resource. It would be "no good" to a journalist—for *he* is nowhere, ever, without his items; but it would be everything, always, to the mere restless analyst. He might by its aid stand against all comers; and this alike in pleasure and in pain, in the bruised or in the soothed

condition. That was the real way to work things out, and to feel it so brought home would by itself sufficiently crown this particular small pilgrimage.

II.

If my sensibility yielded so completely to Baltimore, however, I should add, this was no doubt partly because the air seemed from the first to breathe upon it a pledge of no bruises. I mounted, in the golden June light, the neatest, amplest, emptiest street vista, the builded side of a steepish hill, and, having come in due course to a spacious summit, laid out with monumental elegance and completely void, for the time, of the human footstep, I saw that to suffer, in any fibre, I should have positively, somewhere, to hurl myself upon the spears. Not a point protruded then or afterwards; and the cunning of the restless analyst is essentially such that, with friction long enough in abeyance to leave him a start, he is already astride of his happier thesis, seated firm, having "elected" to be undismountable, and riding it as hard as it will go. The absence of friction, on my monumental hill-top and in the prospects it overhung, constituted, I was to find, an absolute circus-ring for this exercise; and it is much to be able to say, while performing in the circus (even if but mainly to the public of one's own conscience) that one has never had the sense of a safer hour. The safety of Baltimore, I should indeed mention, consisted perhaps a little overmuch, during that first flush, in her apparently vacant condition: she affected me as a sort of perversely cheerful little city of the dead; and from the dead, naturally, comes no friction. Was she cheerful, that is, or was she only resigned and discreet?—with the manner of the good breeding that doesn't publicly prate of family troubles. I found myself handling, in imagination, these large quantities only because, as I suppose, it was impossible not to remember on that spot of what native generation one had come. It took no greater intensity of the South than Baltimore could easily give to figure again, however fadedly, and all as a ghostly presence, the huge shadow of the War, and to reproduce that particular blood-stained patch of it that, in the very first days, the now so irresponsible and absent community about me had flung across the path of the North. This one echo of old Time made the connections, for the instant, all vibrate, and the scene about me, somehow, as it stood, had to account for the great revolution. It was as if *that*,

for the restless analyst, had to be disposed of before anything else; whereby, precisely, didn't the amenity of his impression partly spring from the descent there, on the spot, in a quick white flash, of the most august of the Muses? It was History in person who hovered, just long enough for me to recognize her and to read, in her strange deep eyes, *her* intelligence at least of everything. It might have been there fairly as reassurance. "Yes, they have lived with *me*, and it has done them good, and we have buried together all their past—about which, wise creature as I am, I allow them of course all piety. But this—what you make out around us—is their real collective self, which I am delighted to commend to you. I have found Baltimore a charming patient." That was, in ten minutes, what it had come to; as if the brush of the sublime garment had by itself cleared the air. If there was a fine warm hush everywhere, it was indeed partly that of this historic peace.

But for the rest it only meant that the world was at such a season out of town. Houses were everywhere closed, and the neat perspectives, all domiciliary, and all, as I have hinted, tending mildly to a vague elegance, were the more neat and more elegant, though doubtless also the more mild and the more vague, for their being so inanimate. A certain vividness of high decency seemed in spite of it to possess them, and this suggestion of the real Southern glow, yet with no Southern looseness, was clearly something by itself—all special and local, and all, or almost all, expressed in repeated vistas of little brick-faced and protrusively door-stepped houses, which, overhung by tall, regular umbrage, suggested rows of quiet old ladies seated, with their toes tucked up on uniform footstools, under the shaded candlesticks of old-fashioned tea-parties. The little ladylike Squares, though below any tide-mark of fashion, were particularly frequent; in which case it was as if the virtuous dames had drawn together round a large green table, albeit to no more riotous end than that each should sit before her individual game of patience. One sounds inevitably the note of the "virtue"—so little, in general, can any picture of American town-appearances hang together without it. It amounts, everywhere, to something intenser than the implied absence of "vice"; it amounts to a sort of registered absence of the conception or the imagination of it, and still more of the provision for it; though, all the while, as one goes and comes, one

feels that no community can really be as purged of peccant humors as the typical American has for the most part found itself foredoomed to look. It has been caught in the mechanism of that consistency—to an effect of convenience, doubtless, much more than to any other; and has thus, in the whole vast connection, a relation to appearances that is all its own. The European scene, at a thousand points, looks all its sophistications straight out at us—or looks, in other words, at least as perverse as it practically is. The American, on the other hand, expressing physiognomically no sophistications at all—though plenty of quite common can-dors, crudities and vulgarities—makes one ask if the cash-register, the ice-cream freezer, the lightning elevator, the “boys’ paper,” and other such overflows, do truly represent the sum of its passions. Incontestably, at all events, this immensely ingenuous aspect counts, for any country and any scheme of life, as a great force, just as the appearance of the stale and the congested residing in the comparatively battered mask of experience counts as a weakness: to conceive which the mind’s eye has only to fix a little the colossal American face grimacing with anything of a subtler consciousness. That image, if actually presented, would become, as we feel, appalling. The inexorable fate of the countenance in question may be so to learn to grimace in time, but though few processes are slow, in the United States, and few exhibitions not contagious, any such transition, assuredly, will not be rapid, any more than any such tendency will easily predominate.

All of which would have carried me far from the simple sweetness of Baltimore, were it not that, for the restless analyst, there is no such thing as an unrelated fact, no such thing as a break in the chain of relations. Many a perceived American aspect, for that matter, would by itself have little to give: the student of manners, in other words, to make it presentable—by which I understand to make it sufficiently interesting—must first discover connections for it and then borrow from these, if possible, the elements of a wardrobe. And though it should sound a little monstrous, moreover, one had somehow not been prepared for so delicate an effect of propriety; since there are cases too, indubitably, in which propriety can show for almost as coarse as anything else. It couldn’t have been, either, that one had expected any positive air of license; but the fact was, I suppose, that, for a constitutional story-seeker, a certain still, small shock, a prompt

need of readjustment of view, was involved in one's finding the element of the bourgeois crop up, so inveterately, in latitudes generally associated, so far as one knew them elsewhere, with some perceptible sacrifice to the sway of the senses. I had already, at this date, as I have noted, dipped deep into our own uttermost South, and had there had to reckon with that first slight disconcertment awaiting the observer whose southern categories happen to have been wholly European. His simplest expression for the anomaly he meets is that he sees the citronic belt all incongruously Protestantized: that big word (for so small a bewilderment perhaps) sticks to him and worries him—almost as absurdly, I grant, as if he had expected Charleston and Savannah to betray the moral accent of Naples or Seville. He had not, assuredly, done this; but he had as little allowed, in imagination, for the hyperborean note. A South without church fronts and church interiors had been superficially as strange, in its way, as a Methodism of the subtropic night, a Methodism of the orange and the palm. Such were the treacheries of association; though what indeed would observation be, for interest, if it were not, just by these armed surprises, constantly touched with adventure? The beauty of Baltimore was, all this time, that one could feel it as potentially harmonizing; the citronic belt would not embrace here more Methodism than might consort with it, nor the Methodism pretend to cultivate with any success the hibiscus and the pomegranate.

That I could entertain so many incoherent ideas in half an hour was in any case a proof that I felt, for the occasion, left in possession; quite as the visitor as yet unIntroduced may feel during some long preliminary wait in a drawing-room. He looks at the furniture, pictures, books; he studies in these objects the character of the house and of his hosts, and if there be some domestic treasure visibly more important and conspicuous than the others, it engages his attention as either with a fatal or an engaging force. The top of the central eminence, with its air of an ample plan and of sweeping the rest of the circle, figured the documentary parlor and my enjoyed license to touch and examine; so that when it was a question, in particular, of the monument to Washington, the high column, in the middle, with its surmounting figure and its spreading architectural base, this presence was, for all the world, like that of some vast and stately old-fashioned

clock, a decorative "piece," an heirloom from generations now respectably remote, occupying an inordinate space in proportion to the other conveniences. The ornamental, the "important" clock is apt to be in especial, at such a crisis, a telltale object; its range of testimony, of possible treachery, is immense, and cases are not unknown, I gather, in which it has put the doubting visitor to flight. The greater the felicity, thereby, for the overtopping Baltimore timepiece, which hung about in mild reassurance, promptly aware that it wasn't a bit vulgar, but, on the contrary, of a pleasant jejune academic pomp that suggested, to the fancy, some melancholy, some spectral, man-at-arms mounting guard at the angles, in due military form, over suspected treasures of Style. One could imagine, somehow, under the summer stars, the mystic vigil of these mild heroes; and one could above all catch again the interesting hint of the terms on which, in the United States, the consecration of time may be found operating. It has a trick there all of its own, thanks to which the effect of duration is produced very much as, before the footlights, the prestidigitator produces the effect of extracting a live fowl from a hat. This is a law under which, the material permitting, the decades count as centuries and the centuries as æons. The misfortune is that too often the material, futile and treacherous, doesn't permit. Yet the law is in the happiest cases none the less strikingly vindicated. There, for instance—to pursue undiscouraged my figure of the guest in the empty parlor—were the best houses, the older, the ampler, the more blandly quadrilateral; which in spite of their still faces met one's arrest, at their commodious corners and other places of vantage, with an unmistakable *manner*. The quiet assurance of a position in the world—the world, the only one, with which they were concerned—testified again, in an interesting way, to the simple source of their impressiveness, showing how almost any modern interval could have been long enough to make them nobly antique if such interval might only have been vulgar enough. The age of "brownstone" was to have found no difficulty in *that*; the prolongation of its rage for a quarter of a century amply sufficed to dignify every antecedent thing it had spared (as the survivors of reigns of Terror grow by mere survival distinguished); while, steeped in dishonor up to the eyebrows, that is up to its false cornices of painted and sanded wood and iron, it was never to enjoy, for itself, the advantage it elsewhere

conferred. Nothing has ever been vulgar enough to rehabilitate the odd ugliness, so distinct, yet after all so undemonstrable, of this luckless material: the way one shuddered, in particular, at the touch, on balustrade and elsewhere, of the sanded iron! It has been followed by other rages and other errors, but even the grace of the American time-measure can do nothing for it.

III.

It was of course the fact that the "values" here were all such, and such alone, as might be reflected from the social conditions and the state of manners, even if reflected, for the hour, almost into empty space—it was this that gave weight to each perceived appearance and permitted none to show as trivial enough to project me, in reaction or in inaction, upon the comparative obviousness of the "burnt district." There is almost always a burnt district to eke out the interest of an American city—it is the pride of the citizen and the resource of the visitor when all else fails; and I can scarce, I think, praise Baltimore so liberally as to note that this was the last of her beauties I was conscious of. She had lost by fire, a few months before, the greater part of her business quarter, which she was now rapidly and artfully calling back to existence; but the entertainment she offered me was guiltless, ever so gracefully and gallantly guiltless, as it struck me, of reference, even indirect, to the majesty either of ruin or of remedy. One was, on further acquaintance, thoroughly beguiled, but the burnt district had so little to do with it that the days came and went without my so much as discovering its whereabouts. Wonderful little Baltimore, in which, whether when perched on a noble eminence or passing from one seat of the humanities, one seat of hospitality, to another—a process mainly consisting indeed, as it seemed to me, of prompt drives through romantic parks and woodlands that were all suburban yet all Arcadian—I caught no glimpse of traffic, however mild, nor spied anything "tall" at the end of any vista. This was in itself really a benediction, since I had nowhere, from the first, been infatuated with tallness; I was infatuated only with the question of manners, in their largest sense—to the finer essence of which tallness had already defined itself to me as positively abhorrent. What occurred betimes, and ever so happily, was simply that the delicate blank of those first hours flushed into animation, and that with

this indeed the embroidery of the fine canvas turned thick and rich. It came back again, no doubt, in the inveterate way, to the University presence, and to the eagerness with which, on the American scene—as I tire not, you see, of repeating—the visiting spirit, on such occasions, throws itself straight into sanctuary. It breaks in at any cost, this distracted appetite, and, recomposing the elements to their greater distinction, if need be, and with a high imaginative hand, makes of the combination obtained the only firm standpoint for the rest of the view. It has even in this connection an occasional sharp chill; air-borne rumors reach it of perversities and treacheries, conspiracies possibly hatching in the very bosom of the temple and against its very faith. One hears of the University idea threatened in more than one of the great institutions—reduced to some pettifogging conception of a short brisk term and a simplified culture; a lively, thrifty training for “business competition.” This is a blow to the collective fond fancies set humming, at once, in almost any scholastic shade—under the effect of which one can but give one’s own scant scholar’s hood, while one winces, a further protesting pull over abashed brows. It would have been a question, very much, of what I call breaking in (into the Johns Hopkins) at this moment, had I not here been indulged, in all liberality, with an impression the more charming, in a manner, for the fact of halls and courts brooding in vacation stillness. Perversely adorable always—and I scarce know why—the late afternoon light in deserted haunts of study; with the secret of supreme dignity lurking, above all, in high, dusky, wainscoted chambers where the sound of one’s footfall lingers, to one’s pleasure, like a caress, and where portraits of the appurtenant worthies, the heroes and patrons, grow vague in the twilight. It is a tribute to the forces of idealism lurking again and again, over the country, in the amenity of the general Collegiate appearance, that the last thing these conditions overtly suggest, or seem to accept as their imputed virtue, is this precipitation of the young intelligence into the mere vociferous Market.

I scarce know why, however, I should have appeared, even by waving it away, to make room at our banquet for the possible skeleton of the false, the barbarizing, note; since the natural pitch of Baltimore, the pictorial, so to speak, as well as the social, struck me, once a certain contact established, as that of disinterested

sensibility, the passion of which her University is the highest and clearest example. There was on the splendid Sunday, in particular, a warm, soft fusion of aspects—a *confusion*, in fact, while I now gather it in—which seems to defy, though all unconsciously, the sharper edge of discrimination and to offer itself, insistent, as a general wash of brave Southern shade, the play of a liquid brush of which the North knows nothing. The episodes melt together, yet they also, under a little pressure, come happily apart, and over the large sun-chequered picture the generous boughs hang heavy. Admirable I found them, the Maryland boughs, and so immediately disposed about the fortunate town, by parkside and lonely lane, by trackless hillside and tangled copse, that the depth of rural effect becomes at once bewildering. You wonder at the absent transitions, you look in vain for the shabby fringes—or at least, under my spell, I did; you have never seen, on the lap of nature, so large a burden so neatly accommodated. Baltimore sits there as some quite robust but almost unnaturally good child might sit on the green apron of its nurse, with no concomitant crease or crumple, no uncontrollable “mess,” by the nursery term, to betray its temper. It was with something like that figure before me that I kept communing, as I say, with the bland presence. Even a morning hour or two at the great University Hospital—for one’s experience of the higher tone, one’s irrepressible pursuit of charm, in America, has, to its great enrichment, these odd sequences—even that beginning of the day did nothing to obtrude the ugly or to overemphasize the real; it simply contributed, under some perversion that I can neither explain nor defend, to the general grace of the picture. Why should the great clear Hospital, with its endless chambers of woe, its whole air as of *most* directly and advisedly facing, as the hospitals of the world go, the question of the immensities of pain—why should such an impression actually have turned, under the spell, to fine poetry, to a mere shining vision of the conditions, the high beauty, of applied science? The conditions, positively, as I think of them after the interval, make the poetry—the large art, above all, by which, in a place bristling with its terrible tale, everything was made to seem fair, and fairest even while it most intimately concurred in the work. In short if the Hospital was fundamentally Universitarian—as of the domain of the great Medical Faculty—so it partook for me, in its own way,

of the University glamour, and so the tempered morning, and the shaded splendor, and the passive rows, the grim human alignments that became, in their cool vistas, delicate "symphonies in white," and, more even than anything else, the pair of gallant young Doctors who ruled, for me, so gently, the whole still concert, abide with me, collectively, as agents of the higher tone.

No example could speak more of that enlargement of function, for constituting some picture of life, that many an American element or object, many an institution, has to be felt as practising—usually with high success. It comes back, one notes for the thousandth time, to that redistribution and reconsecration of values, of representative weight, which it is *the* interesting thing, over the land, to see take effect—to see in especial take all the effect of which it is capable. There are a thousand "European" values that are absent, and, whether as a consequence or not of that, there are innumerable felt solutions of the social continuity. The instinct of missing—by which I mean not at all either the consciousness or the confession of lacking—keeps up, however, its own activity; for the theory at least of the native spirit is to consent wittingly to no privation. It has a genius, the native spirit, for desiring things of the existence and even of the possibility of which it is actually unaware, and it views the totality of nature and the general life of man, I think, as more than anything else commissioned and privileged to wait on these awakenings. Thus new values arise as expansion proceeds; the marked character of which, for comparative sociology, is that they are not at all as other values. What they "count" for is the particular required American quantity; and we see again and again how large a quantity symbol and figure have to represent. The interesting thing is that, on the spot, the representation does practically cover the ground: it covers elements that in communities employing a different scale require for their expression (and perhaps sometimes to an effect of waste) a much greater number of terms. Hence the constant impression of elasticity, and that of those pressures of necessity under which value and virtue, character and quantity, greatness and glory even, to a considerable extent, are imputed and projected. There has to be a facility for the working of any social form—facility of comparison and selection in some communities, facility of rapid conversion in others. That is where the American material is elastic, where it affects

one in the manner of some huge india-rubber cloth fashioned for "field" use and warranted to bear inordinate stretching.

One becomes aware thus wherever one turns, both of the tension and of the resistance; everything and every one, all objects and elements, all systems, arrangements, institutions, functions, persons, reputations, give the sense of their pulling hard at the india-rubber: almost always, wonderfully, without breaking it off, yet never quite with the effect of causing it to lie thick. The matter of interest, however, is just this fact that its thinness should so generally—in some cases, to all intents and purposes, so richly—suffice; suffice, that is, for producing, unaided, impressions of a sort that make their way to us in Europe through superimposed densities, a thousand thicknesses of tradition. Which is what one means, again, by the differing "values"; the thinness doing perforce, on the one side, much of the work done by the thickness on the other: the work, in particular, of the appeal to the fond observer. He is by his very nature committed everywhere to his impression—which means essentially, I think, that he is foredoomed, in one place as in another, to "put in" a certain quantity of emotion and reflection. The turn his sensibility takes depends of course on what is before him; but when is it ever not in some manner exposed and alert? If it be anything really of a touchstone it is more disposed, I hold, to easy bargains than to hard ones; it only wants to be *somehow* interested, and is not without the knowledge that an emotion is after all, at the best or the worst, but an emotion. All of which is a voluminous commentary, I admit, on the modest text that I perhaps made the University Hospital stand for too many things. That establishes at all events my contention—that the living fact, in the United States, *will* stand, other facts not preventing, for almost anything you may ask of it. Other facts, at Baltimore, didn't prevent—there being none, outside the University circle, of any perceptibly public, any majestic or impressive or competitive, order. So it was as if this particular experience had been (as the visitation of cities goes) that of *all* present art and organization, that of all antiquity, history, piety, sociability, that of the rich real, and the rich romantic, in fine, at a stroke. Had there been more to see and to feel I should possibly have seen and felt more; yet what was absent, with this sense of feeling and seeing so much?

IV.

There *were* other facts, in abundance, I hasten to add; only they were not, as I say, competitive, not of the public or majestic order—so that they the less imposed, for appreciation, any re-arrangement of values. They were a matter still of the famous, the felicitous, Sunday—into which as into an armful of the biggest and bravest June roses I seemed to find my perceptions cluster. Foremost among these, meanwhile, was that of the plentiful presence, freshly recognized, of absolute values too—which offer themselves, in the midst of the others, with a sharpness of their own, and which owe nothing, for interest, to any question of the general scale. The Country Club, for instance, as I had already had occasion to note, is everywhere a clear American felicity; a *complete* product of the social soil and air which alone have made it possible, and wearing, whenever met, that assured face of the full-blown flower and the proved proposition. These institutions speak so of American life as a success that they affected me at moments as crying aloud to be commemorated—since it is on American life only that they are founded, and since they render it, to my mind, the good office of making it keep all its graces and of having caused it to shed, by the same stroke, the elements that are contrary to these. Nothing is more suggestive than to recognize each time, on the premises, the thing that “wouldn’t do in Europe”—for a judgment of the reasons of its doing so well in the one hemisphere and so ill in the other promptly becomes illuminating. The illumination is one at which, with more space, I should have liked to light here a candle or two—partaking, indeed, by that character of a like baffled virtue in many another group of social phenomena. The Country Club testifies, in short, and gives its evidence, from the box, with the inimitable, invaluable accent of American authority. It becomes, for the restless analyst, one of the great garden-lamps in which the flame of Democracy burns whitest and steadiest and most floods the subject; taking its place thus on the positive side of a line which has its other side overscored with negatives. I may seem too much to brood upon it, but the interest of the American scene being, beyond any other, the show, on so immense a scale, of what Democracy, pushing and breaking the ice like an Arctic explorer, is making of things, any scrap that contributes to it wears a part of its dignity. To have been beforehand with the

experiments, with several rather risky ones at least, and to have got on with these so beautifully while other rueful nations prowl, in the dusk, inquisitive but apprehensive, round the red windows of the laboratory, peeping, for the last news, between each other's shoulders—all this is, for the democratic force, to have stolen a march, over no little of the ground, and to have gained time on such a scale as perhaps to make the belated of the earth, the critical group at the windows, still live to think of themselves as having too much wasted it.

There had been one—I mean a blest Country Club—in the neighborhood of Boston (where indeed I believe there were a dozen, at least as exemplary, out of my range); there had been another, quite marvellous, on the Hudson—one of a numerous array, probably, within an hour's run of New York; there had been a supreme specimen, supreme for a documentary worth, even at Charleston (I reserve to myself to explain in due course, and in such an exquisite sense, my "even"). This had made for me, if you will, a short list, but it had made a long admonition, to which the embowered institution near Baltimore was to add a wonderful emphasis. An admonition of what? it will meanwhile be asked: to which the answer may perhaps, for the moment, not be more precipitate than by one's saying that with any feeling for American life you soon enough see. You see its most complete attestation of its believing in itself unlimitedly, and also of its being right about itself at more points than it is wrong. You see it apply its general theory of its nature and strength—much of this doubtless quite an unconscious one—with a completeness and a consistency that will strike you also (or that ought to) as constituting an unconscious heroism. You will see it accept in detail, with a sublime serenity, certain large social consequences—the consequences of the straight application, in the most delicate conditions, of the prime democratic idea. As this idea is that of an universal eligibility, so you see it, under the application, beautifully resist the strain. So you see, in a word, everything staked on the conception of the young Family as a clear social unit—which, when all is said and done, remains round about you, the ubiquitous fact. The conception of the Family is, goodness knows, "European" enough; but the difference resides in its working on one side of the world in the vertical and on the other in the horizontal sense. If its identity in

Europe, that is, resides more especially in its perpendicular, its backward and forward extension, its ascent and descent of the long ladder of time, so it develops in the United States mainly by its lateral spread, as one may say; expressing itself thus rather by number than by name, and yet taking itself for granted, when one comes to compare, with an intensity to which mere virtue of name elsewhere scarce helps it. American manners, as they stand, register therefore the apotheosis of the Family—a truth for which they have by no means received due credit; and it is in the light of Country Clubs that all this becomes vivid. These organizations accept the Family as the social unit—accept its extension, its *whole* extension, through social space, and accept it as many times over as the question comes up: which is what one means by their sublime and successful consistency. No, if I may still insist, nothing anywhere accepts anything as the American Country Clubs accept these whole extensions.

That is why I speak of it as accepting the universal eligibility. With no palpable result does the democratic idea, in the States, more bristle than with the view that the younger are “as good” as the elder: family life is in fact, as from child to parent, from sister to brother, from wife to husband, from employed to employer, the eminent field of the democratic demonstration. This then is the unit that, with its latent multiplications, the Country Club takes over—and it is easy to see how such units must multiply. This is the material to which it addresses, with such effect, the secret of its power. I may of course be asked what I mean by an eligibility that is “universal”; but it seems needless to remark that even the most inclusive social scheme must in a large community always stop somewhere. Distinctly diverting, often, to Americans, the bewilderment of the European mind on the subject of “differences” and of the practicability of precautions for maintaining these; so beset is that mind, to the American view, with this theory, this habit or need of precautions, and so disposed apparently to fear, in its anxiety, that without the precautions the differences, dreadful thought! may cease. The American theory is, I think, but vague, and the inevitable consciousness of differences reduced to a matter of practice—a matter which, on the whole, very much takes care of itself. Glimpses and revelations come to it, across the sea, on the great wave of modern publicity—images of a social order in which

the precautions, as from above to below, are more striking than the differences and thereby out of proportion to them: an appearance that reads a lesson, of a sort, as to leaving precautions alone. It is true, at any rate, that no application of the aristocratic, none of the democratic, idea is ever practically complete; discriminations are produced by the mere working of the machine, and they so engage alike almost every one's interest, meet alike almost every one's convenience. Nature and industry keep producing differences as fast as Constitutions keep proclaiming equality, and there are always, at the best, in any really liberal scheme or human view, more conscious inaptitudes to convince of their privilege than conscious possibilities to convince of their limits. All of which reflections, however, I agree, would probably have remained a little dim, even for the restless analyst, had not the most shining of his examples bathed the subject, to his eyes, in radiance. This could only be, as I have intimated, that of the bright institution on the Hudson, as half an hour's vision of it, one splendid Sunday of the Maytime, put it before me—all in terms so eloquent that I would fain have translated them on the spot.

For there, to every appearance, was the high perfection of the type—the ample, spreading, galleried house, hanging over the great river, with its beautiful largeness of provision for associated pleasures. The American note was there—in the intensity and continuity of the association, and the interest of the case was in its thus enjoying, for the effect, all the advantages that experience, chastening experience, and taste, “real” taste, could heap upon it. Somewhere in one's mind, doubtless, lurked the apprehension that such a “proposition” might, in that emphatic form, have betrayed a thousand flaws—whereas all one *could* say face to face with it, treading its great verandas and conversation-rooms, its halls of refreshment, repose and exercise, its kitchens and its courts and its baths and its gardens, its wondrous inside and outside palæstra, was that it positively revealed new forms of felicity. It was thus a new and original thing—rare phenomenon!—and actually an “important” one; for what did it represent (all discriminations made and recognized) but the active Family, as a final social fact, or in other words the sovereign People, as a pervasive and penetrative mass, “doing” themselves on unprecedented lines? They had invoked, certainly, high and

congruous countenance; but vain I thought the objection made when I exclaimed to a friend on these marvels. "It depends upon whom I call the People? Of course it depends: so I call them, exactly, the groups and figures we see, here before us, enjoying, and enjoying both so expertly and so discreetly, these conveniences and luxuries. That's their interest—that they *are* the People; for what interest, under the sun, would they have if they weren't? They are the people 'arrived,' and, what is more, disembarked: that's all the difference. It seems a difference because elsewhere (in Europe, say again), though we see them begin, at the very most, to arrive, socially, we yet practically see them still on the ship—we have never yet seen them disembark thus *en masse*. This is the effect they have when, all impediments and objections on the dock removed, they do *that*." And later on, at the afternoon's end, on the platform of the large agreeable riverside station which spread there, close at hand, as the appanage of the club itself, I could but call attention to the manner in which every impression reinforced my moral. The Families, the parties, the groups and couples (the element of the Individual, as distinguished from that of the Family, being remarkably absent) had gathered in the soft eventide for the return to New York, and it was impossible not to read each sign of the show in the vivid "popular" light. Only one did so—and this was the great point—with a positive uplifting of the spirit. Everything hung together and every one was charming. It was my explanatory word therefore to my companion. "That's what the People *are* when they've disembarked."

Having said so much—and with the sense, strange as it may appear, that there would still be much to say—I must add that I suddenly seem to see consternation in the charming face of the establishment, deep in the Baltimore countryside, my impression of which was to lay a train for those reflections: so that with a conscience less clear I might take the image as a warning against the vice of reading too much meaning into simple intentions. Therefore let me admit that the conscious purpose of this house of hospitality didn't look beyond the immediate effect of luncheon or dinner on one of its deep southern verandas, with great trees, close at hand, flinging their shade, with the old garden of the old country home that the Club had inherited forming one prospect, and with a deep woodland valley, stream-haunted if I am not

mistaken, giving breadth of style to another. The Maryland boughs, for that matter, creating in the upper air great classic serenities of shade, give breadth of style; and the restless analyst, all grateful, and truly for the nonce at rest, could but ruefully note how little they had borrowed from any Northern, and least of all from any New England, model their almost academic grace. They might have borrowed it straight from far-away Claudes and Turners; yet one made no point of that either—their interest was so sufficiently their own. Distances of view have often in the North the large elegance, but nearnesses almost never; these are at their worst constitutionally coarse and at their best merely well meaning. I was to find food, all day, for that observation; I was to remain under a charm of which breadth of style was the key. Earth and air, between them, had taken it in hand—so that one was always moving, somehow, under arches that were “triumphal” or sitting in bowers that made one think of temples. It was not that man, or that art, had done much—though indeed they had incurred no shame and had even been capable of a masterpiece, seen in the waning light, of which I shall presently speak. It was the diffused, mitigated glow, the happy medium itself that continued to be meanwhile half the picture. I wandered through it from one impression to another, and I keep, with intensity, that of the admirable outlying Park, treasure of the town, through which I had already three or four times driven, but the holiday life of which, on the warm Sunday night, humming, languidly, under the stars, as with spent voices of the homeward-bound, attested more than ever its valuable function.

That must have been, in the whole pleasant incoherence, on my way back from the sweet old Carroll house, climax of an afternoon drive, yet before another, an ultimate visit, which was the climax of everything. I have sufficiently noted, already, the charming law under which, in the States, any approach to really ripe architectural charm—for the real ripeness is indispensable—enjoys advantages, those of mystery and sanctity, that are achieved in Europe but on greatly harder terms. The observed practice of this art, at times singularly subtle, is in fact half the reward of one’s attention, puzzled though the latter may none the less be to see how the trick is played. So much at any rate one remembers; yet where, after all, would the sweet old Carroll

house, nestling under its wood in the late June afternoon, and with something vaguely haunted in its lonely refinement, not have made an insidious appeal? There are sweet old Carroll houses, I believe, on several other sites—the luckiest form perhaps in which a flourishing family may have been moved to write its annals. The intimation of “annals” hangs about the place, and again we try to capture, under the charming pillared portico, before the mild red brick and the pale pediment and facings, in the series of high chambers, quite instinct with style (small far-off cousins of such “apartments,” say, as those of Kensington Palace, though they cover, bungalow fashion, scarce more than one floor), some lingering, living accent of such a profession of history. We capture verily, I think, nothing; we merely project a little, from room to room and from one mild aspect of the void to another, our old habit of suppositions. Bred of other historic contacts, it instinctively puts forth feelers; but the feelers drop, after a little, like hands that meet nothing; our suppositions themselves, as I have called them, and which but return to us like toy ships that won’t sail, are all they find tangible. There is satisfaction, of a sort, however, even in such arrested questions, when, as before this delicate, faintly resonant shell, each other element also helping, they have been vividly enough suggested. Later on, for the real crown of my day, no wonderments were checked and no satisfactions imperfect. Attained, for the high finish of the evening, by another plunge, behind vaguely playing carriage-lamps, into the bosky, odorous, quite ridiculously romantic suburban night, this was the case of an ancient home without lapses or breaks, where the past and the present were in friendliest fusion, so that the waiting future, evidently, slumbered with confidence; and where, above the easy open-air “Southern” hospitality, an impression now of shafts of mild candle-light across overlaced outer galleries and of throbs of nature’s voice in the dark vaster circle, the Maryland boughs, at their best, presided in the unforgettable grand manner.

HENRY JAMES.